
CANCER FACTS

National Cancer Institute • National Institutes of Health

Hospice

Hospice is a concept of care that involves health professionals and volunteers who provide medical, psychological, and spiritual support to terminally ill patients and their loved ones. Hospice stresses quality of life—peace, comfort, and dignity. A principal aim of hospice is to control pain and other symptoms so the patient can remain as alert and comfortable as possible. Hospice services are available to persons who can no longer benefit from curative treatment; the typical hospice patient has a life expectancy of 6 months or less. Hospice programs provide services in various settings: the home, hospice centers, hospitals, or skilled nursing facilities. Patients' families are also an important focus of hospice care, and services are designed to provide them with the assistance and support they need.

The following resources may offer assistance for people seeking hospice care and information:

- The **National Hospice Organization** (NHO) is dedicated to promoting and maintaining quality care for terminally ill persons and their families, and to making hospice an integral part of the U.S. health care system. The NHO can provide general hospice information and information about hospice services in different areas.

Address: Suite 901
1901 North Moore Street
Arlington, VA 22209-1714
Telephone: 703-243-5900
1-800-658-8898
Web site: <http://www.nho.org>

- The **Hospice Association of America** (HAA) can provide facts and statistics about hospice programs, and can also supply the publication *Information About Hospice: A Consumer's Guide*. This guide offers information about the advantages and financial aspects of hospice, how to select quality hospice care that is best suited for a patient's needs, and state resources available to patients.

Address: 228 Seventh Street, SE.
Washington, D.C. 20003
Telephone: 202-546-4759
Web site: <http://www.nahc.org/HAA/home.html>

- The **Hospice Education Institute** offers information and referrals on various hospice programs around the country and provides regional seminars on hospice care throughout the United States. Comments or suggestions about hospice programs are also welcomed from health professionals and hospice volunteers.

Address: 190 Westbrook Road
Essex, CT 06426-1510
Telephone: 860-767-1620
1-800-331-1620
E-mail: HOSPICEALL@aol.com
Web site: <http://www.hospiceworld.org>

- The **American Cancer Society** (ACS) offers a variety of services to hospice patients and their families. The ACS has free fact sheets and publications about hospice as well. The address of a local ACS chapter may be obtained by calling their toll-free telephone number.

Telephone: 1-800-ACS-2345
Web site: <http://www.cancer.org>

- **Hospice Net** is an organization that works exclusively through the Internet. It contains more than one hundred articles regarding end-of-life issues and is dedicated to providing information and support to patients, families, and friends facing life-threatening illnesses.

E-mail: questions@hospicenet.org
Web site: <http://www.hospicenet.org>

For many people, some hospice expenses are paid by health insurance plans (either group policies offered by employers or individual policies). Information about the types of medical costs covered by a particular policy is available from an employee's personnel office, a hospital or hospice social worker, or an insurance company. Medical costs that are not covered by insurance are sometimes tax deductible.

Medicare, a health insurance program for the elderly or disabled that is administered by the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) of the Federal Government, provides payment for hospice care. When a patient receives services from a Medicare-certified hospice, Medicare hospital insurance pays almost the entire cost, even for some medications that would not be paid for outside a hospice program. For information about the location of Medicare-certified hospice programs, people can call their state health department; the telephone number may be found in the state government section of a local telephone directory. The Medicare Hotline can answer general questions about Medicare benefits and coverage; it can also refer people to their regional home health intermediary for information about Medicare-certified hospice programs. The toll-free telephone number is 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227); deaf and hard of hearing callers with TTY equipment may call 1-877-486-2048. Medicare information can also be accessed at <http://www.medicare.gov> on the Internet.

Medicaid, a Federal program that is part of HCFA and is administered by each state, is designed for patients who need financial assistance for medical expenses. Information about coverage is available from local state welfare offices, state public health departments, state social services agencies, or the state Medicaid office. Information about specific state locations may also be found at <http://www.hcfa.gov/medicaid/medicaid.htm> on the HCFA Web site on the Internet.

In addition, local civic, charitable, or religious organizations also may be able to help patients and their families with hospice expenses.

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Sources of National Cancer Institute Information

Cancer Information Service

Toll-free: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

TTY (for deaf and hard of hearing callers): 1-800-332-8615

NCI Online

Internet

Use <http://www.cancer.gov> to reach NCI's Web site.

CancerMail Service

To obtain a contents list, send E-mail to cancermail@icicc.nci.nih.gov with the word "help" in the body of the message.

CancerFax® fax on demand service

Dial 301-402-5874 and listen to recorded instructions.

This fact sheet was reviewed on 9/3/99